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NEWS RELEASE

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Man Found Guilty of Killing Girlfriend in Whittier

A jury found a 57-year-old man guilty today of fatally shooting his girlfriend in their Whittier home, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Deputy District Attorney Mariela Torres said Rafael Ayala Castillo was found guilty of first-degree murder in case VA145805.

The jury also found true a special allegation that the defendant personally and intentionally discharged a firearm, which caused great bodily injury and death to the victim.

Castillo is scheduled to be sentenced on Jan. 15 in Department D of the Los Angeles County Superior Court, Norwalk Branch. He faces 50 years to life in state prison.

Castillo and his girlfriend, Sandra Rodriguez Polanco, 54, had been in a relationship for nearly 10 years and shared an apartment together in the 11700 block of Floral Drive in Whittier.

According to court testimony, on Sept. 12, 2017, a family member of Polanco's went to her home and found the victim with a fatal gunshot wound to the head.

Authorities were called and police began searching for Castillo, the prosecutor said. The defendant was located that afternoon in the city of Reseda and taken into custody.

The couple had been having relationship problems prior to the murder, according to witness testimony.

The domestic violence case was investigated by the Whittier Police Department.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.